

English E/IIIA Homework Activities

Pre-Reading Activities

Activity 1 Key Vocabulary Find these words in today's articles and then decide what kind of word it is. Then write a Japanese translation of that word.

Score: ____ /17

		noun	verb	adjective	adverb	日本語
ex.	fiancee	✓				婚約者
1.	graduate					
2.	marital					
3.	relative					
4.	prospective					
5.	touchy					
6.	son-in-law					
7.	envelope					
8.	conventional					

		noun	verb	adjective	adverb	日本語
9.	engagement					
10.	extravagant					
11.	distinguished					
12.	scenario					
13.	muddled					
14.	highlight					
15.	custom					
16.	tow					
17.	outpouring					

Activity 2 Scanning As quickly as possible, decide whether these expressions are True, False, or Impossible to Know.

	True	False	Unknown	Score: ____ /7
1. A "meirin" is similar to a "仲人" in Japan.				
2. Huiling's fiance is 29 years old.				
3. John needs to pay the meiren \$6,000.				
4. Mr. Ou is the best customer of John's company.				
5. John's team of meirin included Mr. Lin, Mr. Ou, Mr. Wu, and Mr. Chen				
6. Mrs. Chen is surprised that John is bringing six meirin.				
7. John and Huiling had 23 guests at their wedding.				

Activity 3 Skimming Quickly skim (read quickly and lightly) this week's article and mark any new words or expressions. In the chart below, write all the new words or expressions you marked. When you are finished skimming, look up these new words in your dictionaries and write the Japanese meaning. When you are finished with today's lesson, add these words and expressions to your Personal Dictionaries.

English	日本語	English	日本語	English	日本語	English	日本語

Reading-in-Detail Activities

Activity 4 Reading in Detail Read today's article slowly and carefully. Try to understand everything in the article. When you are finished, read the article again out loud. Do this several times to help you understand and remember new vocabulary.

Activity 5 Discussion Questions Once you have read the articles several times, think about the questions below. You and your group will discuss these questions in class, so prepare your own opinions and thoughts before you come to class. For the last two, think of two questions about the article on your own.

1. In Japan, is it the custom to give a gift when someone gets married? To whom/From whom is the gift given? What is given?
2. How do weddings in Japan differ from weddings in Taiwan?
3. What kind of wedding do you want to have? Explain it to your group.
4. If a foreigner is invited to a Japanese wedding, what do they need to know to be a good guest?
5. What kind of gifts would you like to get on your wedding?
6. Who would be your dream groom/bride?
7. (your question) _____ ?
8. (your question) _____ ?

JOHN'S TAIWANESE WEDDING

by John Felty and Bill McDowell
from *Hemispheres Magazine*

In the spring, Huiling's mother pulled me aside and asked, "What exactly are your plans with my daughter?" As I had already discussed marriage with Huiling, my 24-year-old Taiwanese **fiancee**, Mrs. Chen's tone didn't fluster me. She was just worried that if I, a 29-year-old American **graduate** student, didn't have serious **marital** intentions, her family would suffer a great loss of face. One point that infuriated her was my inability to find a meiren.

I asked some friends about a meiren and learned that it's a title given to the groom's **relative** who goes to the **prospective** bride's house to carry out all the **touchy** negotiations that go into planning a traditional Chinese wedding. Having a meiren is a little old-fashioned, but it can be useful. As a third party, they help save face during the arguments that inevitably arise over issues like the dowry amount and how many "marriage cakes" to buy, which are sent to relatives and friends to announce the engagement. One could easily spend \$6,000 on these cakes alone. Determined to make the Chens proud to have a foreign **son-in-law**, I searched for a meiren.

I work as an Asian representative of a British company, so I asked my boss, Mr. Lin to suggest a meiren. He recommended that I ask Mr. Wu, who works at my company. He was delighted to assist, assuring me he would need only a small "red **envelope**." Huiling later explained that red envelopes are used for cash gifts at ceremonies and on holidays, and a meiren generally gets \$500 - \$1000.

The next day, Mr. Lin burst out of a meeting grinning broadly, patting one of our customers on the back. "Mr. Ou has agreed to be your meiren. He will do much better than Mr. Wu, who is too soft and easygoing. Mr. Ou will give you big face and ensure your girlfriend's parents give you lots of things." With growing interest, I asked, "What kinds of things?" "Their house, car, their money, that kind of stuff," Mr. Ou explained confidently. "Don't I need to give them money?" I asked. "You only give them money if you don't know what you're doing," confided Mr. Ou.

Later I asked my boss about using Mr. Wu as a meiren after all, as he seemed a little more **conventional** . . . "Oh, Mr. Wu will be there, too," he said offhandedly. I was confused. Why both? "You can't just come with one person," he explained. When asked how many people I needed, Mr. Lin replied casually, "Six, but 12 is better."

Huiling assured me that 6 and 12 are lucky numbers, and in a traditional and formal **engagement** I would need either number of people. This sure seemed **extravagant**, but I was determined to do things the Taiwanese way.

It took a week to build my team of meiren. My boss, Mr. Lin, reluctantly agreed. Mr. Ou recruited his business partner. And there was Mr. Chen, from our sales department. With Messrs. Ou and Wu, I had five meiren, so I cajoled Mr. Ou to sign on one of his old customers. I barely knew him, but he looked **distinguished**. I had my meiren team at last!

I proudly stopped by Huiling's parents' house to make the date. "Six people will be coming by with me next Monday to visit with you, can you be here?" They seemed pleased with the news and told me they'd be ready. The next day I called Huiling to make sure she'd have the best tea and fruit for the guests. I heard her mother ask in the background, "Why does he want to bring all those friends, anyway?"

"They're not friends, they're meiren," I told Huiling. "Why in the world are you bringing six meiren?" she exclaimed. I swallowed hard. "To negotiate. To talk to your folks. I don't know, it's *your* custom!" I heard Mrs. Chen again shouting in the background, "What meiren? Six meiren? Who ever heard of that? What am I supposed to say to all of them? Six! That's crazy!" I was losing my cool. "You said six. Everybody said six! I booked six!"

Huiling replied evenly, "Listen, you need six people, but only one meiren. Now count. I'm one person, Mom and Dad make three, one meiren, and a friend and you make six. But don't worry. My parents decided not to bother about a meiren."

Our meiren **scenario** illustrates how easily communication in a cross-cultural relationship can become **muddled**. Due to my imperfect Mandarin and my inexperience with Taiwanese customs, I confused the need for six people with the need for six meiren.

The **highlight** of the wedding was the 12-course Chinese feast at a local restaurant. As is the **custom**, Huiling and I, with parents in **tow**, stopped at each of the 23 tables and toasted my new relatives. My parents couldn't understand the words, but shared in the **outpouring** of good wishes for a bright future.